

Hinges & Tongs

ROCHESTER PHILATELIC ASSOCIATION, INC
P.O. Box 10206, BRIGHTON STATION
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14610-0206

Nov. -- Dec. 2002

RPA OFFICERS

2002 - 2003

President- Jim Piecuch
Vice President- Mark Hull
Treasurer- George Fekete
Corresponding Secretary-
Joe Doles
Recording Secretary-
Tom Fortunato

Board of Governors

Chuck Schultz (term expires
June 30, 2003)
John Cali (term expires
June 30, 2004)

Ed Kawasaki (term expires
June 30, 2005)

Immediate RPA Past President-
John Kellas, III

Appointments

Membership Chairperson-
Florence Wright
Librarian- Joe Doles

NOTE OF THANKS

Please pass along my thanks for the contribution the Rochester Philatelic Association members made to the APS-APRL building renovation fund in memory of Mary. She was always pleased with her continuing ties to the RPA, having served as president in 1960. But during that time she did so much more, hosting so many committee meetings and show meetings that I couldn't guess at the total. She loved philately and did much to promote RPA through her ties with the two newspapers. Again, thank you for 'his remembrance. It was so thoughtful.

Gordon Morison

An Enjoyable Post Office Tour

By Tom Fortunato

About 30 RPA members and their guests took part in a field trip to Rochester's main post office on Jefferson Road November 7 at 6:15 PM.

Everyone was greeted at the door by Bob Scherzi, Customer Relations Coordinator for the Rochester area, and the main liaison between the USPS and RPA. He noted that this was the first tour of the facility allowed since the events of September 11. Authorization not only had to come from Buffalo, western New York's district office, but also the northeast regional USPS headquarters for it to take place

Once everyone was accounted for at the entrance, we were brought to a large conference room where refreshments and cookies were served. Bob first introduced us to several postal employees on hand, including George Niessin, manager of retail operations for the western New York district, whom some will remember as being one of the organizers of the Strong Museum's antique toys first day ceremony from over the

summer. He then thanked the RPA for their continuing support of the Rochester Postal Service and presented the group with a certificate and plaque in commemoration of our visit.

The group then headed to the floor to begin the tour. It has been about 8 years since the last time most of us had the opportunity to see the postal facility, and much has changed since automation became a priority within the USPS. "Where are all of the people?" was heard by more than a few RPACers.

First a note about the timing of our visit. The PO facility runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is open year round, with the obvious busiest times around the Christmas season and at tax-time in April, and lulls in the summer months.

Three "tours" or shifts work there daily, with a total permanent staff of some 1,500 employees. From 3 PM to 12 midnight, the building handles outgoing mail exclusively (to non- 145xx, 146xx, 147xx zip codes) which needs to be sent to one of the other 500 major USPS mail centers around the country or over-

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seas. At midnight the shift changes, as does the priority of the workers, which then handles mail needed to be sorted for the residents within this post office's domain for delivery that day. In-district mail handling takes about 6 hours, after which it is delivered to individual post offices and eventually to our homes.

So what actually happens to a letter from the time you mail it to the time it arrives at its destination? We followed the process in order.

After it arrives at your local PO, it is trucked to a major mail facility like ours in large mailbags. Those bags are hauled into the building, placed on hooks and lifted onto a dumping machine where the contents are sprawled onto a conveyer belt. Non-standard sized mail (thicker than 1/4 inch, envelopes larger than a number 10, etc.) is automatically shaken out and sent to workers to hand process.

The regular sized mail then heads towards the facer-canceller machine. Mail passes an ultra-violet light which senses the phosphor tagging on the stamp(s) used, then flips the orientation of the letter so mail all faces the same direction—flipped upside down and stamps facing the lower left corner. This is so the mail will be cancelled properly in the next step in the process. Either plain date and flag slugs or slogan cancel slugs are used in these machines. Once cancelled, mail pieces are placed in 2 foot by 1 foot low-profile plastic trays and move on to the next piece of equipment.

Metered mail also has ultra-violet

tagging used to “face” the mail properly, but most of the time is segregated from stamp-bearing envelopes at the originating local post office and put into separate transportation bags. These bags can skip the facer-canceller machines (since no postmark is needed) and simply get orientated and trayed so they can move on through the process.

From the facer-cancellers, mail gets sent to OCRs (optical character readers). Like philately, mail handling has a language all its own, and abbreviations abound in the USPS. These machines automatically read the address found on each piece of mail and determines its zip code, potentially down to the individual postman (carrier-sort) level when set up to handle mail for delivery within the post office area. These machines also put the zip code bar codes on letters once it identifies the zip.

Sometimes mail is rejected by the machine because it can't read the zip code. Christmas mailers take note—colored envelopes are notorious for creating errors in this machine and should be avoided!

Mail without zips get pulled out here for human intervention. Unreadable mail is also pulled out in this step. Those letters get their address side imaged and stacked in order. You've probably noticed orange bars on the reverse side of some envelopes. Those are mail pieces which have gone through this process. Workers in remote locations view each scan at some later time and key-punch the zips in manually. Since the mail is in order, each piece is then bar-coded properly and continues in the mail

stream.

After each piece gets bar-coded properly, it gets placed in one of many trays, all of which go to separate destinations. These trays get bar-coded themselves relating to their destination and pass into the Robotic Containerization System (RCS), a huge machine which lifts each tray and readies them for shipping out, either to local post offices or to other large mail facilities.

So what happens to oversized pieces, bulk-mail, priority or registered mail, and overseas mail?

Oversized envelopes, known as “flats,” go through special cancellation machines. You've probably seen the large roller style postmarks, about 1.5 inches wide that go across the tops of envelopes. There are also special conveyer belts which sort these pieces and bag them to their destination.

Bulk mail, especially large and heavy items like catalogs, is treated like the flats above, but obviously don't need to be cancelled. To receive rate discounts, mailers need to pre-bundle or tray “like” zip codes together.

At one time several years ago, priority mail was outsourced to a third party for processing. Now that is handled exclusively by USPS employees within the facility.

While not on the post office tour, we did pass by the Registered Mail Room. Registered mail is kept under high security and lock and key. This mail always travels in sealed mail pouches and is signed for

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every step of the way. If you plan to use registered mail, expect your mail to take a couple of extra days to reach their destination.

Mail for overseas once separated from the domestic mail goes through its own process. It is post-marked and sorted for destination. This mail will either be sent to New York or Los Angeles where special facilities exist to get them to their destination

That's a brief description of how mail moves through the building. But we learned other details you may not be aware of.

The Jefferson Road building also acts as the local post office delivering mail for several zip codes around the area. A large section of the building is dedicated as the working area for these local postmen.

A new room, the Repair Station, has been assigned for body-bagging damaged mail. We saw several trays worth of water soaked letters drying out before being placed in the plastic "Our Apologies" bags. These are very collectible and come with several versions of text.

Veterans of prior Jefferson Road tours were a bit disappointed that we didn't get to see the loading and unloading docks, the Nixie clerk area where employees figure out where improperly addressed mail should go, or the live animal holding areas.

After the tour we went back to the conference room and were joined by Rochester Postmaster John Montague. He answered questions for about an hour dealing with a

wide range of topics. Here are some of the highlights.

The entire US Postal System handles about 1 billion pieces of mail every day. It is this country's largest employer, not considering the Federal Government, and the world's second largest employer. That distinction now to Wal-Mart. It runs the world's largest fleet of trucks.

The Jefferson Road building on average handles some 450,000 pieces of mail daily. That climbs to 650,000 during the peaks of the Christmas season. Monday, December 9, was expected to be 2002's busiest postal day, since the majority of cards are expected to be mailed out that weekend.

Security remains a high concern for everyone in the Postal Service. Few details were forthcoming from the Postmaster for obvious reasons. But he did tell us that security heightened years before September 11, beginning with the Unabomber incidents. Since that time mail weighing over 2 pounds has not been allowed to be dropped in mailboxes and must be hand delivered to the post office. Procedures are in place should any suspect packages be uncovered at Jefferson Road. Rochester Haz-Met teams regularly run drills at the facility. There are no X-ray machines on the premises.

More mail than you think travels by train. This is partly due to the fact that commercial airlines are accepting less and less mail for their own security reasons. Packages almost exclusively travel by train- even priority mail, which perhaps explains why the formerly touted priority mail 2-3 day deliv-

ery guarantee is now just a promise.

Packages sent by Express Mail go by Fed-Ex planes. The recent contract agreement between the USPS and their competitor provides the USPS space on their planes in exchange for allowing Fed-Ex to place their own mailboxes at US Post Offices.

Mail a few years ago locally posted Friday nights and Saturdays was sent to Buffalo for weekend processing. Not anymore. That practice was stopped about 2 years ago, with weekend mail just kept on hold until processing late Sunday evening/early Monday morning.

Gasoline for the trucks and vans of the Post Office comes from local sources. They have contracts with local companies to fill up their vehicles. It was noted the buying power of the USPS might get a better rate at the pump. Well they do, because as a quasi-Federal agency, they don't have to pay Federal tax on any gas they purchase. Every penny a gallon increase in gas costs the Postal Service about \$1 million a day.

Near the close of evening one RPA member asked the Postmaster why the mini postal museum on the second floor wasn't accessible to the general public. It houses a number of artifacts from the past 100 or so years, ranging from cancellers to mailboxes and assorted equipment. Because of that exchange discussions are now ongoing between the Rochester Post Office and the Strong Children's Museum which may eventually result on the items being displayed there.

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As you can tell, it was an intriguing two hours, not only for us but for our hosts as well. I hear regularly from APS Chapter clubs around the country that they have a terrible relationship with their local postal officials. We in Rochester are thankful that that is not the case here, and expect our ties will continue to grow stronger as years go by. Thanks again to everyone at the Rochester USPS!

TRIBUTE TO JIM CURRY

By Florence Wright

Topical Time, the American Topical Association's magazine, has a page each issue for member statistics. Earlier this year, I noticed they listed Jim Curry under "Lost Addresses." I wrote to the editor immediately, saying "- last summer we lost Jim to a violent death. He was found fatally stabbed on July 3, 2001, killed in an apparent burglary attempt.."

The editor printed this letter in the July/August issue. In September, I received a letter from Estelle Buccino, secretary-treasurer of the Mathematical Study Unit of the ATA. She wrote that Jim had joined the unit in 1992 and had renewed his membership annually through 2001. When Ms Buccino sent a dues reminder in July 2001, her note was returned by the Postal Service, marked "DECEASED." As a result, an "In Memoriam" notice was printed in *Philamath*, the MSU journal. She described all this to me. But she said she appreciated learning the full story of Jim's death, however shocking it was.

When I answered her letter, I sent along a copy of the write-up on Jim that had appeared in *Hinges and Tongs* last year, and which included Tom Fortunato's eulogy.

The Mathematical Study Unit officers received a copy of that article, and

Ms. Buccino wrote to say thanks to all of our club (RPA) and expressed appreciation for helping them to know Jim Curry a little better.

* * * *

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Florence Wright

WELCOME – new member **Mary Iman** of Rochester. Mary works with a kids' stamp club which is part of the Finger Lakes Stamp Club. The group meets once a month in the Newark Library.

Joseph Cronin of Pittsford has applied to be an RPA member again; Welcome back!

Many thanks to all those members who have renewed memberships by sending in their dues. There are a few who haven't, and we list

them here to remind them that \$15.00 will bring you a new and improved *Hinges & Tongs* along with all the good programs at the RPA meetings: The Bixlers – Luann, Garvin Jr. and Garvin, III; William Brorein, Steve Gilbert, Al Greco, Ilya Gurevich, Carl Miller, Dr. Robert Mueller, Don Osbourne, Paulo Pasiecznyk, John F. Powers, and Steve Suffet.

Please send check or money order to F. Wright, 33 Northumberland Rd., Rochester, NY 14618.

We also appreciate when members let us know that, for whatever reason, they aren't renewing dues. But we will miss Walt Straight and Mary Duffy, and Tony Torres who has moved to Clinton, TN.

Developing A Stamp Exhibit by Michael Bass, Cleveland

(Reprinted with permission) The Israel Philatelist - October, 2002

Reprinting suggested by B. Kiener, RPA Life member.

The Cleveland Chapter of the SIP host a monthly meeting where philatelic lectures, auctions and new ideas are shared. Our chapter put a lecture together about "The Basics of Exhibiting a Philatelic Collection" to help our members gain knowledge and confidence to exhibit locally. Our group is very committed to exhibiting, with many members participating on the local, national and even international level.

The purpose of this article is to guide a collector at deciding what to exhibit, how to select the stamps or covers from their collection and then to assemble the material in an organized manner. We think it's easy and fun. Some members used the stamps of Israel and chose a

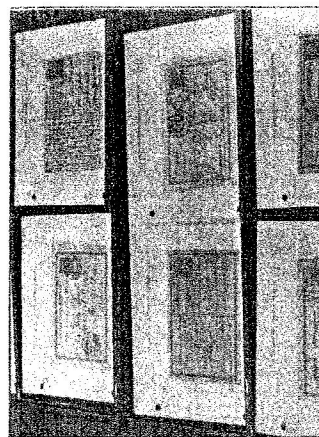
theme (animals on stamps, heroes, etc.) or time periods (the 60s, 70s, or 80s). Mounting the stamps and using a Bale catalogue to describe their exhibit is all that is needed. Other club members used Postal History as their exhibition theme. Exhibits included Forerunners, Mandate, Interim Period or Israel and included more elaborate research using the IP and BAIPIP magazines or a variety of topical books available through the Ed Fund.

Our hope is to encourage exhibiting by all philatelists: young, old, novice or experienced. What better way to spend a rainy afternoon than to play with our stamp collections? Please consider exhibiting at the next local show.

Developing A Stamp Exhibit by Michael Bass, Cleveland (Reprinted with permission) The Israel Philatelist - October, 2002 Reprinting suggested by B. Kiener, RPA Life member.



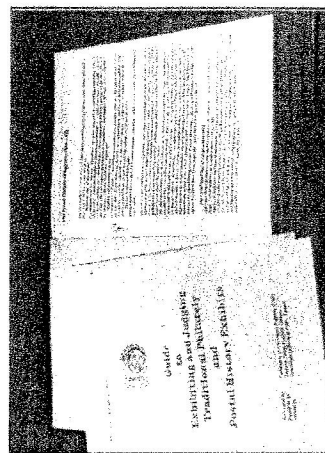
Survey your philatelic material and organize it along lines of interest. Look for themes — Sports, Personalities etc. Or organize by Postal History — Forerunners, Mandate, Israel.



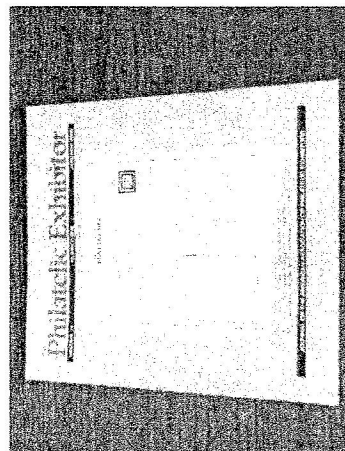
Layout your material in an orderly fashion. Group items by City (i.e. Jerusalem), by date (i.e. pre-WORLD WAR II) or by topic (i.e. Personalities). Survey your material for a possible theme or story for your exhibit.



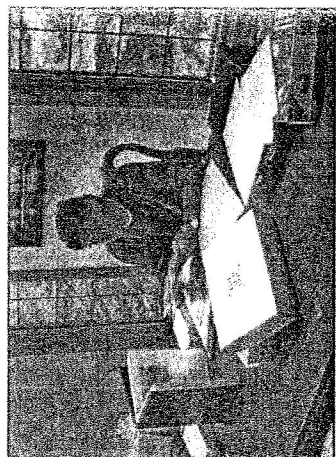
Network through organizations: Society of Israel Philatelists, APS and others — France, Israel.



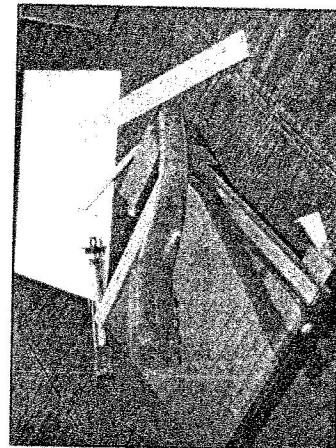
Understand basic exhibition rules. They call for 18 pages per frame with pages 8-12 x 11. Delivery of exhibits to the show.



Survey how exhibits are put together. Visit local stamp shows and national shows if possible. Observe how others have created an exhibit. Join the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors.



Decide on which of your stamps or covers tell your story. Sort through your material. Examine items to be used as to their genuine, of good quality, and their beauty.



Tools of the exhibitors: paper cutters, rulers, pencils, good quality paper, plastic sheet protectors.



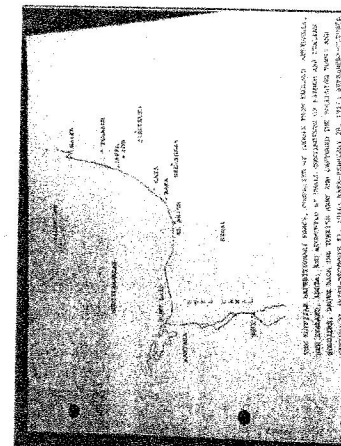
Research your material and organize important information such as: cancells, dates, names, historical facts, postage rates, etc.



Layout exhibition pages; standardize the presentation from page to page, make basic layouts.



Computers can help lay out pages. There are page-maker software. Computers are flexible for changes and can provide enhanced graphics in typesets.



Title page. Important to the story of the exhibit and informs the judges as to what you are presenting. It is required for all exhibitions. It also makes possible enhanced graphics.



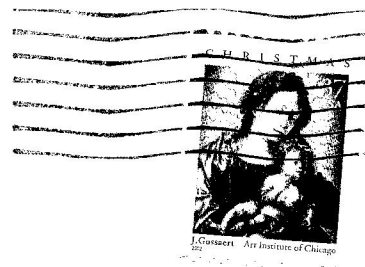
The result!

FUTURE PROGRAMS

DECEMBER 12 RAY STONE'S 10 CENT CANAL BOAT FIRST DAY COVER SLIDE PROGRAM SILENT AUCTION	JANUARY 9 INTERNATIONAL ROTARY ON STAMPS ATA SLIDE PROGRAM SILENT AUCTION	FEBRUARY 13 "VALENTINES" ATA SLIDE PROGRAM SILENT AUCTION
DECEMBER 26 <u>NO MEETING</u> <i>Merry Christmas</i> <i>And a</i> <i>Happy New Year</i>	JANUARY 23 PROGRAM TO BE ANNOUNCED SILENT AUCTION	FEBRUARY 27 PROGRAM TO BE ANNOUNCED SILENT AUCTION

The Rochester Philatelic Association, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization formed in 1913. Meetings are held on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, September through June, at **The Twelve Corners Presbyterian Church, 1200 S Winton Rd.** The church hall opens at 7 PM for informal get-togethers. The meetings start at 7:30 PM, followed by a program – slide show, speaker, or auction. Annual dues are \$15 per adult and \$5 for junior members.

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